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Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

DPW-01 IO-12 SSO-00 NSCE-00 RSR-01 /095 W
---------- 027463
R 251100 Z APR 73
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 735
INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 7187

EO 11652: N/ A
TAGS: PINS PINT MILI VC
SUBJ: MR 3 CG MINH TALKS ABOUT TON LE CHAN, PHUOC LONG, AND
ARTILE 4

HERE WITH REPEAT OF AMCONSUL BIEN HOA MESSAGE 0089 QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BIEN HOA 0089
SUBJ: MR 3 CG MINH TALKS ABOUT TON LE CHAM, PHUONC LONG, AND
ARTICLE 4
E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT MILI VC
SUMMARY: IN CONVERSATION APRIL 20 WITH CONSULS, MR3 CG LTG MINH
WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT MILITARY SITUATIONS AT TON LE CHAM BASE CAMP
AND IN PHUOC LONG PROVINCE, AND EXPLAINED WHY HE THOUGHT GRVN IS
RESISTING CONSULATIONS BETWEEN OPPOSING FIELD COMMANDERS CALLED
FOR IN ARTICLE 4 OF CEASE- FIRE PROTOCOL. END SUMMARY.

1. IN A CONVERSATION WITH BIEN HOA CONSULS APRIL 20, MR 3 CG
LTG NGUYEN VAN MINH WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT TON LE CHAM. HE HAS BEEN
UP TO AN LOC THE PREVIOUS DAY AND HAD TALKED BY RADIO TO THE
RANGER MAJOR COMMANDING TON LE CHAM, WHO ASSURED HIM THE RANGERS
WERE WDLL DUG IN AND HAD PLENTY OF FOOD AND AMMUNITION; IN
FACT, THE MAJOR TOLD MINH THAT NO MORE SUPPLIES NEED TO BE SENT
FOR THE TIME BEING. " THE ENEMY KNOWS," SAID MINH," THAT THEY CAN' T
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TAKE THE CAMP WITH LESS THAN A REGIMENT, AND WITHOUT SUFFERING EXTREMELY HEAVY CASUALTIES FROM RANGERS, VNAF, AND ARVN ARTILLERY."

2. MINH THOUGHT THE COMMUNISTS WANTED TO TAKE OR NEUTRALIZE TON LE CHAM BECAUSE OF ITS STRATEGIC POSITION ASTRIDE THE SAIGON RIVER CORRIDOR. COMMUNIST SUPPLY OPERATIONS SOUTHWARD WOULD BE GREATLY
SIMPLIFIED IF THEY COULD FLOAT MATERIAL DOWN THE RIVER INSTEAD OF LUGGING IT OVERLAND.

3. A SECOND COMMUNIST OBJECTIVE, IN MINH' S VIEW, WAS TO FORCE CONSULATATIONS BETWEEN LOCAL COMMANDERS (E. E. BELOW CORPS AND DIVISION LEVEL) IN THE SPIRIT OF ARTICLE 4 OF THE CEASE- FIRE PROTOCOL TO THE PARIS AGREEMENT. MINH NOTED THAT THE GRVN HAD COUNTERPROPOSED A MEETING OF LOCAL COMMANDERS IN THE PRESENCE OF TPJMC REPRESENTATIVES.

4. MINH DISCLAIMED KNOWLEDGE OF REASONS FOR THE GRVN ATTITUDE TOWARD ARTICLE 4 CONSULTATIONS, BUT HE OFFERED VARIOUS HYPOTHESIS: (A) THE GRVN MAY FEEL THAT IT CANNOT SIMPLY AGREE TO AVOID CONTACT BETWEEN LOCAL GROUND FORCES WITHOUT ALSO SETTLING QUESTIONS
OF USE OF ARTILLERY AND AIR POWER, AND ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPLY TROOPS
(WHICH ARE TO BE SETTLED IMMEDIATELY BY THE JMC, ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 3 (B) OF THE CEASE- FIRE PROTOCOL); (B) THE GRVN MAY FEAR THAT THE VC WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ITS SECRET CHAIN OF COMMAND BY SENDING HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED OFFICERS TO NEGOTIATE WITH " SIMPLE" GRVN SOLDIERS IN COMMAND OF ARVN BATTALIONS, RF COMPANIES, AND PF PLATOONS; (C) THE GRVN WOULD ALSO HAVE TO CONSIDER WHETHER A LOCAL ARRANGEMENT COULD WORK TO THE DISADVIANTAGE OF THE GRVN IN ADJACENT AREAS. (COMMENT: WHILE THE GRVN IS VULNERABLE TO CRITICISM FOR REFUSAL TO COMPLY FULLY WITH ARTICLE 4, MINH HAS POINTED OUT SOME GUNUINE PROBLEMS IN IMPLEMENTING THAT ARTICLE WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE GRVN CHAIN OF COMMAND AND STARATEGIC POSITIONS. PERHAPS THE BEST SOLUTION WOULD BE FOR THE GRVN
TO PERMIT LOCAL COMMANDERS TO CONSULT COMMUNIST COUNTERPARTS, BUT FORBID THE COMMANDERS TO AGREE TO ANYTHING WITHOUT REFERENCE UP THE CHAIN OF COMMAND. END OF COMMENT.)

5. MINH ALSO SAID THAT THE SITUATION IN PHUOC LONG PROVINCE IS MUCH IMPROVED OVER TWO WEEKS AGO, WHEN INTELLIGENCE REPORTS OF THREATENED ATTACK PROMPTED HIM TO SEND TWO RANGER BATTALIONS UP THERE, AND TO ORDER AIR STRIKES ON REPORTED NVA/ VC POSITIONS.
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HE NOW SAYS THE NVA/ VC NEVER INTENDED TO OVERRUN PHUOC BINH AND SONG BE TOWNS, WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN SO BLANTANT A VIOLATION AS TO HAVE INCITED U. S. REPRISAL; RATHER, THE COMMUNISTS WERE HIPING THAT A THREATENED ATTACK WOULD FORCE RVNAF BACK INTO DEFENSIVE

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POSITIONS IN SONG BE AND PHUOC BINH, RELINQUISHING SOME OUTLYING VILLAGES TO THE COMMUNISTS AND TIGHTENING THE NOOSE AROUND PROVINCE AND DISTRICT CAPITALS. (COMMENT: WHILE COMMUNIST INTENTIONS IN PHUOC LONG PROVINCE HAVE NOT BEEN CLEAR, WE AGREE THAT THE SITUATION THERE HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE INCREASE IN RFVAF ACTIVITY. BUT COMMUNIST PRESSURE HAS FORCED BOTH THE ABANDONMENT OF LONG DIEN HAMLET IN DON LUAN DISTRICT BY RECENT RETURNEES FROM AN AN LOI REFUGEE CAMP IN BIEN HOA PROVINCE, AND THE INDEFINITE SUSPENSION BY ARVN ENGINEERS OF IMPROVEMENT OF NATIONAL HIGHWAY 14 AND INTERPROVINCIAL ROUTE 1- A, WHICH CONSTITUTE THE PROVINCE' S LIFELINE TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD. END OF COMMENT.)
WALKINSHAW
UNQUOTE
BUNKER

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To: EA
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